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A Survey of relationship between the quality of work life and performance of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between Quality of Work Life and performance of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University. Research methodology was descriptive and based on correlation. In this study 60 Department Chairpersons were selected by proportional stratified sampling method. Results indicate that: 1) Results of Pearson Correlation showed that QWL has positive relations with performance. 2) Result of Regression analysis demonstrates that Developing human capabilities, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Total life space and Social integration in the work organization predict the performance. 3) Result of One Sample T-Test showed that there isn't significant difference between QWL of Department Chairpersons in Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

Keywords: Quality of work life, Performance, Department Chairpersons, Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

1. Introduction

Although research has uncovered important predictors of Quality of Work Life (QWL), yet it has been absent present and has not been fully explored. To date, much of the empirical research on QWL has implicitly, if not explicitly, adopted a contemporary view of job satisfaction, stress, labour relations and a broad based view of occupation. Past scholars have offered a variety of definitions and suggestions of what constitutes QWL. For instance, QWL is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and they should be treated with dignity and respect (Straw and Hecksher, 1984). The elements that are relevant to an individual's quality of work life include the task, the physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job (Cunningham and Eberle, 1990). QWL consists of opportunities for active involvement in group working arrangements or problem solving that are of mutual benefit to employees or employers, based on labour management cooperation. People also conceive of QWL as a set of methods, such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment and high-involvement aimed at boosting the satisfaction and productivity of workers (Feuer, 1989; Che Rose et al-A, 2006).

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Hackman and Oldham's (1980) further highlight the constructs of QWL in relation to the interaction between work environment and personal needs. The work environment that is able to fulfil employees' personal needs is considered to provide a positive interaction effect, which will lead to an excellent QWL. Parallel to this definition, Lawler (1982) defines QWL in terms of job characteristics and work conditions. He highlights that the core dimension of the entire QWL in the organization is to improve employees' well-being and productivity (Rethinam, 2008).

Later definition by Beukema (1987) describes QWL as the degree to which employees are able to shape their jobs actively, in accordance with their options, interests and needs. It is the degree of power an organization gives to its employees to design their work. This means that the individual employee has the full freedom to design his job functions to meet his personal needs and interests. This definition emphasizes the individual's choice of interest in carrying out the task. However, this definition differs from the former which stresses on the organization that designs the job to meet employees' interest. It is difficult for the organization to fulfil the personal needs and values of each employee. However if the organization provides the appropriate authority to design work activities to the individual employees, then it is highly possible that the work activities can match their employees' needs that contribute to the organizational performance (Rethinam, 2008).

Proceeding to previous definitions, Lau, Wong, Chan and Law (2001) operationalized QWL as the favourable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security and career growth opportunities. Indirectly the definition indicates that an individual who is not satisfied with reward may be satisfied with the job security and to some extent would enjoy the career opportunity provided by the organization for their personal as well as professional's growth.

The recent definition by Serey (2006) on QWL is quite conclusive and best meet the contemporary work environment. The definition is related to meaningful and satisfying work. It includes (i) an opportunity to exercise one's talents and capacities, to face challenges and situations that require independent initiative and self-direction; (ii) an activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved; (iii) an activity in which one understands the role the individual plays in the achievement of some overall goals; and (iv) a sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well. This issue of meaningful and satisfying work is often merged with discussions of job satisfaction, and believed to be more favourable to QWL.

This review on the definitions of QWL indicates that QWL is a multi-dimensional construct, made up of a number of interrelated factors that need careful consideration to conceptualize and measure. It is associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, productivity, health, safety and well-being, job security, competence development and balance between work and non-work life as is conceptualized by European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions, 2002; Rethinam, 2008).

Most people want to improve their performance on the job, to receive constructive suggestions regarding areas they need to work on and to be commended on their job well done. Thus, employees during their career will like to experience growth and development, a sense of where one is going in one's work life. QWL encompasses the career development practices used within the organization such as placing clear expectations on employees on their expectations and succession plans. QWL is linked to career development and career is evolving from such interaction of individuals within the organizations (Che Rose et al-A, 2006).

Career arises from the interaction of individuals with organizations and society. Career is not primarily a theoretical construct but is used in meaningful ways, given meaning and it creates meaning and also experience. Careers are typically defined as a 'sequence of work roles (Morrison, and Holzbach, 1980) or a sequence of a person's work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989).

Indeed, it is difficult to best conceptualize the quality of work life elements (Seashore, 1975). Walton (1975) proposed eight major conceptual categories relating to QWL as (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (4) opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social integration in the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and total life space and (8) social relevance of work life. Several published works have addressed the constructs that make up the QWL domain and key elements of QWL programs (Straw & Heckscher, 1984; Shamir & Salomon, 1985; Loscocco, & Roschelle, 1991). Others such as Pelsma et al (1989) and Hart (1994) found that psychological distress and morale contributed equally to teachers' QWL. They determined that in the work climate of an occupation, QWL can be assessed by combining the amount and the degree of stress and the degree of satisfaction experienced by the individual within his/her occupational role. Winter et al (2000) viewed QWL for academicians as an attitudinal response to the prevailing work environment and posited five work

environment domains that include role stress, job characteristics, supervisory, structural and sectoral characteristics to directly and indirectly shape academicians' experiences, attitudes and behaviour (Che Rose et al-B, 2006).

The selected constructs of QWL that we use in this article are derived from the Walton's model for the Improvement of Living and Working Condition. The dimensions of QWL selected are adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work life (Walton, 1975).

Most studies of organizational performance define performance as a dependent variable and seek to identify variables that produce variations in performance. Researchers who study organizational performance in this way typically devote little attention to the complications of using such a formulation to characterize the causal structure of performance phenomena (March & Sutton, 1997).

These complications include the ways in which performance advantage is competitively unstable, the causal complexity surrounding performance, and the limitations of using data based on retrospective recall of informants. Since these complications are well-known and routinely taught, a pattern of acknowledging the difficulties but continuing the practice cannot be attributed exclusively to poor training, lack of intelligence, or low standards. Most researchers understand the difficulties of inferring causal order from the correlations generated by organizational histories, particularly when those cancellations may be implicit in the measurement procedures used. We suggest that the persistence of this pattern is due, in part, to the context of organizational research. Organizational researchers live in two worlds. The first demands and rewards speculations about how to improve performance. The second demands and rewards adherence to rigorous standards of scholarship. In its efforts to satisfy these often conflicting demands, the organizational research community sometimes responds by saying that inferences about the causes of performance cannot be made from the data available, and simultaneously goes ahead to make such inferences. We conclude by considering a few virtues and hazards of such a solution to dilemmas involving compelling contradictory imperatives and the generality of the issues involved.

2. Research Questions

- 1) There is a significant relationship between QWL with performance among the department chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.
- 2) Quality of work life dimensions predicts performance.
- 3) There is a significant difference between QWL of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology was descriptive and based on correlation.

3.1. Samples and procedures

Statistical population of this research includes all Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University. The population size was 99, which 60 Department Chairpersons were chosen by proportional stratified sampling method. We used the Walton's QWL questioner and the author made performance questioner for collecting data.

3.2. Measures

The Quality of work life questionnaire: This questionnaire prepared by Walton (1975) includes dimensions of Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and healthy working conditions, Opportunity for continued growth and security, Constitutionalism in the work organization, The social relevance of work life, Total life space, Social integration in the work organization and Developing human capabilities. This questionnaire includes 32 questions and it measures QWL in a discriminative way and with the use of Likert's five rating scale. Calculated reliability of mentioned questionnaire in this research was $\alpha = 0.91$.

The performance questionnaire: This questionnaire prepared by author (2007) includes dimensions of planning organizing, coordinating, leadership, control, human relations, decision making, change, evaluation, goal setting feedback, motivation, partnership, creating a learning context. This questionnaire includes 42 questions and it measures performance in a discriminative way and with the use of Likert's five rating scale. Calculated reliability of mentioned questionnaire in this research was $\alpha = 0.86$.

Results

1) There is a significant relationship between QWL with performance among the department chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

In table (1) the relation between the elements of QWL and performance of department chairpersons is presented.

Table1: Simple correlations between the elements of QWL performance

		Overall QWL	compensation	Safe working conditions	Opportunity for growth	Total life space	Constitutionalism	social relevance	Social integration	Developing human capabilities
Performance	r	0.763	0.37	0.585	0.50	0.715	0.575	0.536	0.763	0.50
	p	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

The results indicated that there is a significant relation between QWL and its elements and performance. Among QWL dimensions Social integration in the work organization has the greatest relation ($r=0.763$) with overall performance.

2) Quality of work life dimensions predicts performance.

In the following table (2) the results of multiple regression analysis with the use of stepwise method indicate that QWL dimensions predicts performance.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis of QWL dimensions and performance

Predictor, V Model	R	R ²	P			
			1	2	3	4
1	0.528	0.28	$\beta = 0.592$ P=0.001			
2	0.583	0.34	$\beta = 0.481$ P=0.001	$\beta = 0.41$ P=0.015		
3	0.672	0.45	$\beta = 0.393$ P=0.001	$\beta = 0.352$ P=0.011	$\beta = 0.328$ P=0.008	
4	0.706	0.498	$\beta = 0.30$ P=0.001	$\beta = 0.284$ P=0.001	$\beta = 0.266$ P=0.004	$\beta = 0.215$ P=0.013

1. Developing human capabilities
2. Developing human capabilities, Constitutionalism in the work organization
3. Developing human capabilities, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Total life space
4. Developing human capabilities, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Total life space, Social integration in the work organization

From eight QWL dimensions that have been entered into regression formula as predict variables, three dimensions of Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and healthy working conditions, Opportunity for continued growth and security, The social relevance of work life are omitted and two dimensions of Developing human capabilities ($\beta=0.592$), Constitutionalism in the work organization ($\beta=0.41$), Total life space ($\beta=0.328$), Social integration in the work organization ($\beta=0.215$) predict performance. A relation between two mentioned predictor variables and performance is significant. In general 0.451 of performance variations is explained by them ($R^2=0.498$).

3) There is a significant difference between QWL of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

As it is shown in table (3), the comparison between data means indicates a significant statistical difference. The results also represent no significant difference between QWL of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University.

Table 3: One sample T test for measuring QWL of Department Chairpersons of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University

	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Esfahan University	Mean Esfahan Medical ScienceUniversity	Mean difference
Quality of work life	0.991	58	0.24	2.515	2.259	0.256

The results observed in table (3) demonstrate that there isn't significant difference between QWL of Department Chairpersons in Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University ($T=0.991$, $P=0.24$).

Conclusion

This research aims to explain Quality of work life based on performance. Findings of this research show that there is a significant relation between QWL and its dimensions with performance. The studies of Walton(1973), Che Rose et al (2006), Rethinam (2008), Rastegari (1999), Ali Akbari (2004), Kharazi (2006) confirm the results presented in this research. Among Quality of work life dimensions, Social integration in the work organization has the greatest relation with overall performance. Findings of multiple regressions indicated that Developing human capabilities, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Total life space, Social integration in the work organization dimensions have more contribution in prediction performance. In general 0.498 of performance variations is explained by them ($R^2=0.498$).

The results one sample T-test demonstrates that there isn't significant difference between Quality of work life of Department Chairpersons in the Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University. Finally the findings of research show that: Department Chairpersons in the Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Science University are in high level concerning Quality of work life dimensions.

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